

**What is claimed is:**

1. A gatekeeper connected to an H323 network,  
comprising:

a first message receiving section which  
receives a gatekeeper discovery message from an end  
5 point;

a transport data transmitting section; and

a control section which determines whether  
said gatekeeper has the lightest load among a  
plurality of gatekeepers including said gatekeeper,  
10 and controls said transport data transmitting section  
to transmit transport data to said end point in  
response to the gatekeeper discovery message, when it  
is determined that said gatekeeper has the lightest  
load.

2. The gatekeeper according to claim 1, wherein  
said control section controls said transport data  
transmitting section not to transmit transport data in  
response to the gatekeeper discovery message, when it  
5 is determined that said gatekeeper does not have the  
lightest load.

3. The gatekeeper according to claim 1, wherein  
said control section comprises:

a storage section which stores a load state  
list indicative of existence of any of said plurality

5 of gatekeepers having lighter loads than said  
gatekeeper; and

a first control section which refers to said  
load state list to determine whether said gatekeeper  
has the lightest load among said plurality of  
10 gatekeepers including said gatekeeper, and controls  
said transport data transmitting section to transmit  
transport data to said end point in response to the  
gatekeeper discovery message, when it is determined  
that said gatekeeper has the lightest load.

4. The gatekeeper according to claim 3, wherein  
said control section further comprises:

a load state notice message receiving section  
which receives a load state notice message from one of  
5 said plurality of gatekeepers as a notice transmitting  
gatekeeper, said load state notice message including a  
load of said notice transmitting gatekeeper;

a calculating section which calculates a load  
of said gatekeeper as a self-load; and

10 a second control section which extracts the  
load of said notice transmitting gatekeeper from said  
load state notice message, and compares the extracted  
load and the self-load, and writes an identifier of  
said notice transmitting gatekeeper at least into said  
15 load state list, when the extracted load is lighter  
than the self-load.

5. The gatekeeper according to claim 4, wherein said control section further comprises:

a load state request message transmitting section, and

5 wherein said second control section controls said load state request message transmitting section to transmit a load state request message with an identifier of said gatekeeper and said self-load to each of said plurality of gatekeepers, and

10 each of said plurality of gatekeepers selectively replies said load state notice message to said gatekeeper based on a load of each of said plurality of gatekeepers.

6. The gatekeeper according to claim 3, wherein said control section further comprises:

a load state request message receiving section which receives said load state request message  
5 with an identifier of each of said plurality of gatekeepers and the load of said each gatekeeper; and

a load state notice message transmitting section, and

10 wherein said second control section extracts the load of said each gatekeeper from said load state request message, and compares the extracted load and the load of said gatekeeper as a self-load, and controls said load state notice message transmitting

section to transmit a load state notice message with  
15 the self-load and said identifier of said gatekeeper  
to said each gatekeeper, when the extracted load is  
lighter than the self-load.

7. The gatekeeper according to claim 6, wherein  
said second control section discards said load state  
request message, when the extracted load is not  
lighter than the self-load.

8. A load distributing method in a communication  
system which comprises a network; an end point  
operatively connected to said network; and a plurality  
of gatekeepers including first and second gatekeepers,  
5 said method comprising the steps of:

(a) receiving a gatekeeper discovery message  
from said end point in said first gatekeeper;

(b) referring to a load state list which  
indicates identifiers of ones having lighter loads, of  
10 said plurality of gatekeepers, in said first  
gatekeeper to determine whether said first gatekeeper  
has the lightest load among said plurality of  
gatekeepers; and

(c) transmitting transport data to said end  
15 point in response to said gatekeeper discovery message  
in said first gatekeeper, when it is determined that  
said gatekeeper has the lightest load.

9. The load distributing method according to claim 8, further comprising the step of:

(d) ignoring said gatekeeper discovery message, when it is determined that said gatekeeper  
5 does not have the lightest load.

10. The load distributing method according to claim 8, further comprising the steps of:

calculating a load of said first gatekeeper as a first load;

5 receiving a load state notice message including a load of said second gatekeeper as a second load from said second gatekeeper;

extracting said second load from said load state notice message;

10 comparing said first load and said second load; and

writing an identifier of said second gatekeeper into said load state list, when said second load is lighter than said first load.

11. The load distributing method according to claim 10, further comprising the step of:

transmitting a load state request message with an identifier of said first gatekeeper and said  
5 first load to said second gatekeeper.

12. The load distributing method according to claim 10, further comprising the steps of:

receiving said load state request message with an identifier of said second gatekeeper and said  
5 second load;

extracting said second load from said load state request message;

comparing the extracted second load and said first load; and

10 transmitting a load state notice message with said first load and said identifier of said first gatekeeper to said second gatekeeper, when the extracted second load is lighter than said first load.

13. The load distributing method according to claim 12, further comprising the step of:

discarding said load state request message, when the extracted second load is not lighter than  
5 said first load.